

Here we go again, I guess is what people are saying. The President has now threatened to veto 11 of 12 appropriations bills, including Labor-HHS, which provides crucial funding for schools, medical research, and police. He said he is going to veto WRDA, which passed the Senate with 81 votes.

I am not alone when I say this latest veto threat of the farm bill rings kind of hollow. It rings hollow because Secretary Johanns went around the country giving lectures about the current payments system, what a bad deal it was. Yet the Bush administration had every opportunity to fix the issue of nonfarmers receiving farm payments. This is what Johanns loved to go around the country saying. Why don't they fix this? He is the Secretary of Agriculture, part of the Bush administration. Yet even though he has gone around and given PowerPoint presentations to this effect, he should have been giving a PowerPoint presentation of why the Bush administration hasn't done anything to fix it. It can all be done by changing regulations. You don't need to change the law.

What they now blame Congress for failing to do, they could have reformed—the “actively engaged” farming payments system—right now. That is what they talk about all the time. They talk about people in apartment houses drawing benefits. They can change it. The President can do that. He has the power to do that. We gave him the power to do that. We passed a bill 20 years ago that reformed the process. Yet an April 2004 study by the General Accounting Office determined the Bush Department of Agriculture's track record in implementing this reform was, at best, halfhearted, and that is being generous.

A problem exists in the farming payment structure. We have all heard of individuals who live in the city but claim they are farmers and receive a subsidy. The Bush administration could change that with a regulation. The farm bill begins to tackle that problem—a problem that exists, in large part, because the Bush administration has failed to address it.

Now, the President plans to veto a bill that reforms the payment process, while maintaining the President's administrative authority to act on it. This bill takes reform seriously. If President Bush were serious about it as well, rather than just looking at political points, he would do something about it. He has the power to do something about it.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader.

VA-MILCON APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, we are now in the sixth week of the 2008 fiscal year, and the majority still

hasn't sent a single funding bill to the President for the 2007 fiscal year. It has been 20 years—20 years—since Congress has waited this late in the year to send a single appropriations bill to the President. The Veterans appropriations bill, for example, passed the Senate 2 months ago but is still sitting in Congress.

So why do our friends on the other side of the aisle continue to drag their feet on this very important measure? We know everyone agrees the bill is important and needed. We know our veterans have sacrificed for our country, and it is our duty—our duty—to provide for them. We know the bill holds wide bipartisan support, and the military construction part of the bill is important for providing housing, readiness, and improved quality of life for our troops. We also know the President will sign the veterans bill into law when he gets it. So why hasn't this bill been brought to the floor for a vote? Why haven't we had a vote on the veterans conference report? Shouldn't we put aside the gamesmanship and send this bill to the President so it can be signed before November 11, which happens to be Veterans Day?

The majority has decided it wants to tie the veterans bill, which will be signed into law, to the Labor bill, which is approximately \$9 billion over the President's request, which, of course, will be vetoed. Now, some have said \$9 billion is not much of a difference, but to put it into context, \$9 billion is more than the individual budgets of 33 of our States. It is more than the entire yearly budget for the FBI. It is more than the budget of the U.S. Coast Guard. More than that, this figure will serve as a starting point for next year's budget, and that will serve as the starting point for the year after that. In short, this increase will compound into \$120 billion in more Washington spending over the next 10 years.

To put this in context, for American taxpayers, for this same amount of money, we could have, instead, made permanent marriage penalty relief and permanent the expensing for small business and have increased taxpayers' standard deduction or we could have provided a 2-year alternative minimum tax patch.

So why attach a bill that overspends so dramatically it would not be signed into law and further postpone funding for our veterans? Our veterans deserve better. We shouldn't penalize them for the mismanagement and overspending of this Congress. We have a responsibility to send the veterans bill to the President at the earliest possible time. Providing funding to our veterans by Veterans Day, November 11, is still a realistic and attainable goal, and Congress should do it.

The election was 1 year ago. It is time to get serious about funding our veterans. We must remember our current force is composed entirely of volunteers, and they have earned our support. If our colleagues are serious, they

will bring the veterans bill to the floor. No gimmicks, no games. Let us get it done before Veterans Day.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to a period of morning business for 60 minutes, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the leaders or their designees, with Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the final half.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Georgia.

RECOGNIZING THE GOOD WORK OF ED AND MARY ETTTEL

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, it is a pleasure to rise today to recognize the work of some remarkable Georgians, Ed and Mary Etttel, of Marietta, who happen to be in the gallery this morning. The Etttels have worked together in their community to help touch the lives of our men and women in uniform. Guided by the Any Soldier Foundation, Ed and Mary send requested goods to our soldiers serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Somalia, and Kosovo. Soldiers can go to www.ansoldier.com and request what specifically they need and want. Good people such as the Etttels are making sure these soldiers' requests do not go unnoticed.

Serving 4 years of Active Duty in the U.S. Navy and 22 years on Reserve Duty, Ed Etttel undoubtedly knows what it means to sacrifice for his country. However, his loyalties to his fellow men and women in uniform did not end with his retirement. Together with his wife Mary, and daughters Erin and Alison, the Etttels committed themselves to being a support group for those who are serving overseas today.

For the Etttels, many Saturdays over the past 2 years have been similar to last Saturday. The smell of pancakes usually welcomes 40 volunteers arriving at the Etttel's house at Sope Creek Farm. After breakfast, the volunteers pick a soldier's request from the Any Soldier Web site, take it into the inventory room, and pack boxes with food, magazines, school supplies, clothing, toys or Christmas decorations. They also include a handwritten letter of support to each individual soldier, thanking them for their service.

Because of the Etttels' community leadership and the help they have received from the other members of the Mount Bethel United Methodist Church in Marietta, volunteers have been able